

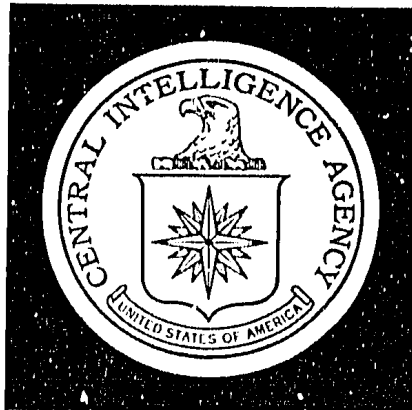
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Approved For Release 2005/06/29 : CIA-RDP85T00875R002000150002-8

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BOARD OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM

NO. 2-67

ANOTHER ROUND OF INSTABILITY IN WEST AFRICA

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17 February 1967

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

O F F I C E O F N A T I O N A L E S T I M A T E S

17 February 1967

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM NO. 2-67

SUBJECT: Another Round of Instability in West Africa*

West Africa, plagued by chronic instability, is in a period in which some coups or changes of regime are probable. The new governments are not likely to be much more effective or stable than their predecessors, nor are US interests likely to be greatly affected by the changes.

* * * * *

1. The political instability which is endemic in so much of West Africa appears to be coming to the surface in a number of countries. Several of the smaller states, deeply enmeshed in political difficulties, are likely to undergo changes of regime in the next six months or so. Prime candidates for further instability currently are Togo, Dahomey, and the Central African Republic, whose military rulers are unable

* This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence in the Directorate of Intelligence.

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to make headway in curing chronic financial and economic problems, or in providing a workable political framework for divergent tribal and regional interests. Civilian regimes in the former British colonies of Sierra Leone and The Gambia are also in trouble. In these two ministates the incumbent prime ministers have only a shaky grip on power amidst mounting financial troubles and increasing doubts about the loyalties of the security forces. Elsewhere, political tensions remain high in Guinea and Congo (Brazzaville), and no solution is in sight in the Nigerian crisis. These developments are not unexpected; they are a product of the forces which we have foreseen as plaguing the region.* As in the case of earlier rounds of instability, it is difficult to identify cause and effect relationships in the present troubles though they seem to occur annually at about the time many West African states are preparing budgets.

2. Most African coups heretofore have been of only passing concern even to neighboring countries. However, there is now some prospect of wider involvement in certain cases.



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Despite the Togolese-French defense treaty, Ghana seems prepared to intervene militarily in Togo, if necessary to prevent the installation in Lome of a regime friendly to Nkrumah, and Guinea recently appeared willing to respond to the appeal of the prime minister of Sierra Leone for a show of military support. Furthermore, there are a few stirrings on the part of the Soviets which bear watching. The USSR is showing a cautious interest in expanding cultural and economic relations with West Africans, e.g., the Soviet embassy staff in Freetown has recently increased from 12 to 23; in Lome, 29. In Nigeria, a team from Moscow is also engaging in exploratory talks about a steel mill, and the USSR may be interested in furnishing considerable educational assistance, a field hitherto monopolized by the US and UK.

3. By and large, changes of regime only slightly affect such US interests as exist in these small West African states. These periodic replacements of personalities or governments result largely in further delaying badly needed economic measures and hopes for social and economic betterment, since no new regime as yet has been much of an improvement over its predecessor. We do not believe that the USSR wishes to risk

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substantial involvement in West African convolutions at this stage, but as the Africans search for new sources of assistance its presence is likely to increase.

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